NEW BOOKS.

The Overthrow of Holofernes.

The Assyrian wolves who were accustomed to come down upon the Hebrew fold are pictured vigorously for us in the opening chapters of Thompson Buchanan's story of "Judith Triumphant" (Harper & Brothers). Holofernes is powerfully set forth. He was a roaring bull of a man, burly, huge, truculent, full of strong wine. If it had been our fortune to be betrayed into his tent we think we should have looked early for a way out of that place of shelter and high revelry. Holofernes, as he reclined on his ivory couch, with Nin-Gul, the sensuous dancing girl, brazenly sharing the same, was forever filling his cup from a convenient bowl of the rich wine of Helbon, and he never neglected to drain the cup after it was filled. As we beheld cup after cup enter into the Assyrian Captain we were satisfied of the paradox that the Captain was in his cups. Waves of temper swept over him, and with every wave he reached under his pillow for a javelin and threw it at somebody.

We had never deliberately formulated for ourselves the beauty of Judith. From plenty of pictures of her we have received the impression of a dark and terrible woman. the mere sight of whom might well have put Holofernes upon his guard. Here it is only her eyes that are made to contain a possible warning—unless, indeed, it is to be thought that all varieties and shades of feminine beauty are very well calculated to make us look out. This Judith appeared small by reason of the perfect proportion of her parts, as the case is said to be with the Church of St. Peter in Rome. Her hair rippled back from a low, broad forehead and fell almost to her knees in an undulating, enveloping stream of fiery gold. "Her eyes were twin seas, blue green, unfathomable, in which her light and dark thoughts made the sparkle and the shadows. Her nose was straight and strong. Her mouth spelled love," though there were final lines of power at the corners. Capping all, enhancing the spell of all, was "that mysterious, radiating soul charm which binds men even unto death."

The beleaguered Hebrews of the city of Bethulia were on the point of yielding to the Assyrians when Judith undertook their deliverance. They were without water to drink. The story says explicitly that "the people were silent, for they could speak no more. Without water all throats soon become useless." The people of Bethulia were presumably uncommon, for they continued to say a good deal nevertheless. It is recorded that they spoke though they were silent. Life itself has puzzled us so much, has been so full of fairly stupendous contradictions, that we have not allowed ourselves to be disturbed at this point.

There was hearty eating as well as copious drinking in the tent of Holofernes. We make out that there were nine guests at the banquet there, reported at page 57. The attendant musicians, who played flutes and harps and taborets and pipes, and who played them madly, were probably fed also, else they never would have had strength to carry out their insane performance. Still there must have been a tremendous quantity for everybody who could have been got into a war tent of the period, for "the banquet board" supported "the carcasses of two sheep roasted whole" and "the quarter of an ox," to say nothing of "huge piles of bread, figs, dates and all the fruits of Damascus." If we were nine persons and a band we should think it trouble enough to eat all the fruits of Damascus. We do not know what we should do if we were called upon to effect a supplementary disposition of two sheep and a quarter of an ox, to say nothing of dates, figs and piles of bread.

At page 62 we come upon an instance of the discharging of javelins by Holofernes. He thought to transfix Judith; also Achior the Ammonite, hero of this tale. Judith was shrouded in a cloak; he had not yet been made aware of her transcendent beauty. He objurgated himself when she cast aside her cloak and acquainted him with what he had endeavored to transfix. The javelin, deflected by the ready sword of the hero, "rang loud" on an ornamental brazen bull in the tent, "having passed clean through the body of the sentry. The soldier fell, and died writhing, an impaled worm." As he died, Holofernes, casting his eyes upon the uncloaked Judith, begged pardon. "His little eyes became red like fire. His very beard was twitching with desire."

We have not wondered that a commander so susceptible to the charms of females, and so given to the drinking of wine, should have encountered disaster. Surely the fold had a chance against this bibulous and libidinous wolf. Without hesitation the powerful Holofernes bespoke Judith for himself and passed over Nin-Gul to an inferior one. Behold this happy inferior "breathing in the mind-reeking perfume" of Nin-Gul's hair—whatever sort of perfume that may be. We find Nin-Gul "unnoticing an interruption" a little later. She would have been happier if the power had been hers to be oblivious of other things. Because she could not be oblivious, because she persisted in loving the unworthy Holofernes, she died a tragic death.

It did no good for Nin-Gul to expostulate with the huge and absolute Assyrian. As she expostulated "his great Assyrian nose became more hooked, his black eyes smaller, beadier." There is a detailed account here of how Judith disposed of Holofernes. She had courage; she was an actress with splendid nerves; she touched him vitally with a dagger at a moment that it will doubtless thrill the reader to read about. "Her cringing body was against his, his hot lips tore long kisses from hers. He was crushing her to him, his jumping blood, as fire making lurid pictures in the madhouse of his brain," and in that moment she put an end to him.

There was great slaughter of the Assyrian army after this. "The sun leaped over the hills on the east to find that during his absence in the night the fertile plain in which he took a pride had broken out with a horrible irruption of dead men." We share the dread feeling that we know was entertained by the sun. We feel ourselves willing to retire under the candid blaze of the ascending luminary. Judith, a widow, conferred happiness upon Achior, a widower. The revivified city of Bethulia, with newly irrigated throats, acclaimed the triumphant pair. "Long live Judith!" cried the delivered people. It is not told what sanitary disposal was made of the multitudinous dead. Enough, perhaps, that the living had water once more and that love survived to renew a threatened and shattered world.

A Stronghold of the Devil.

It is possible that the reader will not be quite breathless at the opening part of Sir William Magnay's story of "A Prince of Lovers" (Little, Brown & Co., Boston). When the hero pumped the organ so that the heroine might play he was almost certainly guilty of an offense. It is not likely that she played in a manner to soothe a listening world. If she did solace the nerves of the fastidious, we beg her pardon and implore her to continue and him to keep on pumping. Presumably it is to her credit that she played in a church on off days when there was no congregation. We have often thought of plenty of music that it ought to arise in an unpopulated area.

The point of the organ playing in this story is that it was really dangerous to the performers. The wish to kill musicians is not uncommon, but the actual killing of them is infrequent, as sufferers can attest. In spite of their deserts they are apparently immune. In this tale the lady who played the organ was a Princess and the gentleman who pumped was a King traveling incognito. Such a combination is unusual, we dare say. Perhaps we had better be patient, and not stamp and "rare," as we certainly should do ordinarily.

The justifiable feeling of the reader, that a suborner of music is in no extreme danger and that a man who pumps an organ for a lady need still not expect to be taken off incontinently, is offset here by the circumstance that this lady had political importance, that she was an object of attention and solicitude on the part of the State and that the man who assisted her in the accomplishment of music in a lonely church needed to be approved by the Prime Minister, a zealous and practical person not at all susceptible to the persuasions of pure romance.

Our hero had to stop pumping the organ and run away. Doubtless his head would have been forfeited if he had remained. But the reader who has tolerated music will hardly be moved by the emergencies of the tale till he comes to the experience of the hero and the heroine in the castle of Count Irromar, the robber nobleman of the Devil's Forest. It was lucky enough that the pair ever came out of this infamous stronghold, which was dovetailed into the rock of the mountains in the most ingenious and secure way. Fortunately it occurred to the deliverers to batter down the front door instead of bothering themselves with the rocky and impregnable dovetailings. It seems as though there were always some way for justice to triumph over the power of wrong, and we were glad and not surprised when the castle in the Devil's Forest was tumbled down. The devil is weak when the generous novelist takes him in hand. A great story, judging by our own emotions during its perusal.

A New French and English Dictionary.

Two innovations are noticeable in the "International French-English and English-French Dictionary," published by Hinds, Noble & Eldridge, New York, which, we infer from the preface, is the first of a series of dictionaries that will include the chief civilized languages. The first is the employment of the international phonetic alphabet to explain the pronunciation, the other is inclusion of the inflected forms of words, irregular plura's and verb tenses, for instance, in the alphabetical arrangement.

Theoretically, no doubt, the employment of the phonetic alphabet should be a great convenience—provided the person using the dictionary will learn it. It has had the approval of philologists for many years and is employed in scientific papers. It describes sounds with precision. Simple as it is, however, it certainly has not been accepted or learned by the general public who may be expected to use these dictionaries, any more than the simple changes in phonetic spelling advocated by the same philologists, and we fear that the pronunciation figured here will prove as meaningless to most students as though it were marked in hieroglyphics.

That is a pity, for no higher authorities can be found than Prof. Paul Passy, who marked the French sounds, and Prof. George Hempl of the University of Michigan, who marked the English. Both are militant phoneticians and may be counted upon to give the prevailing pronunciation, regardless of tradition. If the key alphabet can be mastered, this dictionary marks a great step in advance, so far as pronunciation is concerned.

The other "improvements" on which the editor, Mr. Robert Morris Pierce, descants complacently seem of more doubtful expediency. Perhaps the inclusion of irregular inflexions may aid those who have neglected the grammar, but they, we fancy, have no business with the dictionary. The intelligence which fails to comprehend that *cieux* is the plural of *ciel*, or that got is the past of get, can hardly grasp the complications of the phonetic table. There is a noble scorn of etymology which may be the outcome of modern phonetics.

The editor is very contemptuous of the devices for saving space and putting facts under appropriate heads which most dictionaries employ. The result so far as we can judge in this case, is the omission of much matter which properly belongs to a dictionary. Blank spaces might well have been filled with more definitions, and particularly with more idiomatic expressions. The result is a mere school dictionary, when there was room in the volume and demand from the public for a comprehensive vocabulary of the language.

The typographical dress is excellent; the three faces of the type used are good and clear, and the paper, while thin enough to bring 1,300 pages into a handy small quarto, is opaque and tough.

Mr. Maurice Hewlett's Stories.

Maurice Hewlett's new book, "Fond Adventures," contains a quartet of short stories written in the author's usual florid and picturesque style and based upon his favorite theme, the romance and adventure of the Middle Ages.

"The Heart's Key" is a troubadour's tale of love and lovers in the hill country of Toulouse and tells the story of the golden girdle made of riveted jeweled plates called a heart's key, which virgins wore until they were wedded, and how "Saill the Proud Lady" wore it clasped beneath her breasts night and day until she gave with it the heart men had called cruel to the lover who best deserved the gift.

"Brazenhead the Great" is a collection of new "Canterbury Tales," concerned with a company of Pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas, but the tales are marred in the telling and too confused with tedious conversation and interrupted with brawls to reward the attention demanded in following the plot. The final stories take the reader back to the splendid days of the renaissance in Italy and present artistic and convincing glimpses of life in the many towered city of Florence and at the magnificent court of the Sforzas in Milan—the one founded upon the traditional feuds of the nobles in the turbulent city on the Arno, the other presenting famous personages familiar to every one who has read the chronicles of Mantua and Milan.

The charm of Mr. Hewlett's stories lies in the fact that while they are not historical romances founded upon episodic facts, they emphasize historic facts and illuminate historic phases by the audacious introduction of actual characters among fictitious personages and by employing the background of the actual as the scene of imaginary exploits. They are like the great processional frescos and paintings in which the important figures are portraits of actual personages—like the pictures of the Madonna which Botticelli painted, with the Medici children as the attendant angels, or the Medici princes as adoring worshipers. Mr. Hewlett has the spirit of the picturesque Italy of song and story and the power faithfully to deliver it to his readers. The scenes of revelry and splendor, of love and passion and revenge, of chivalry and valour, which he describes find prototype and parallel, if they lack actual verification, in the documents still preserved in the archives of the cities of Italy. The book is printed by Harper & Bros.

Scotch Stories of Juvenile Life.

"Mr. Pennycook's Boy" is a "wee rascal" of the Macgreegor type, full of "deevilish pranks," and desperately sorry for them when he is found out, who gives the name to J. J. Bell's new volume of short stories dealing with the comedy and tragedy of child life in the streets of Glasgow. Mr. Pennycook was a respectable Scotch grocer with a hard dialect but a soft heart. His errand boy takes unholy delight in pinning the end of a new ball of twine to the mantle of Mr. Pennycook's best and stoutest customer. He said he didn't mean to "dae it— But, but, she was thet fat." On another occasion he put a "pun o' peasemeal" in Mistress Cameron's umbrella because "she wis aye sayin' she wis aye lukin' upward for a shower o' blessin's." The other little lads and lassies who appear in the stories receive the sympathetic treatment from Mr. Bell's interpretation which has made "Wee Macgreegor" a childish classic. Macgregor himself figures in "Green Paint" and the Sunday school "surree," as ingenious as ever in getting into mischief, as contrite after his offenses and as crafty in avoiding the punishment of his transgressions. There are also a few stories of grownups included in the volume, which is humorous and sympathetic, as well as entertaining to those who can read the Scotch dialect without too much difficulty. The book is published by Harper & Bros.

Fair Italy.

It is curious to note the difference in temperament and in point of view shown in four books dealing with Italy, all written by women, which happen to come to us at the same time. First in point of age and time is a new edition of the late Miss Amelia B. Edwards's "Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys" (George Routledge & Sons; E. P. Dutton & Co.). The Dolomite country she discovered thirty years ago is no longer untrodden or unfrequented; that marks the age of the book, but there is a heartiness, an open air feeling, an unconsciousness of literary effort in the description that makes it still attractive and makes us regret the mid-Victorian days.

Far more literary is the lady who under the pseudonym Vernon Lee writes "The Enchanted Woods and Other Essays on the Genius of Places" (John Lane; The Bodley Head). Her range of place is wide, including Germany and France, both north and south, but the years she has spent in Italy, which she knows so well, make the Italian sketches the best in what she calls her "ragbag of impressions." That she never forgets her style is perhaps too evident, but the sympathy and feeling for whatever view or impression she tries to describe are sincere and pierce through.

On Mrs. Edith Wharton Italy has had a strange effect. Her enthusiasm carries her to lengths that must seem strange to Italians, and she delights in getting completely away from all paths, even in literature and art. Her rococo romance was a remarkable production, astonishing perhaps more for her efforts to understand the unpleasant netherside of the eighteenth century than for the pictures she drew. In "Italian Backgrounds" (Charles Scribner's Sons), again, with charming descriptions of places and scenes, she hurls her erudition about obscure artists and authors and unknown regions at the reader rather provokingly. There is a disproportion in her values which is sometimes amusing. Every-

Continued on Eighth Page.

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